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The Antiquity of the Buddha-Image: The Cult of The Buddha.

By

O. C. Gangoly.

Mit 10 Abbildungen.

The study of Early Buddhist Art in India has been hitherto embarrassed by a wrong orientation, by ascribing the authorship of the first image of the Buddha to Hellenistic masons of Gāndhāra.¹⁾ It is very significant that on the story-telling reliefs at Sānci and at Bhārhut the presence of the Buddha is designated not by any anthropomorphic image of the Master, but by symbols and emblems. Indeed, on the well-known central lintel of the Eastern Gate of Sānci, in the famous Mahābhiniṣkramaṇa scene (the 'Great Departure'), the Buddha is represented not

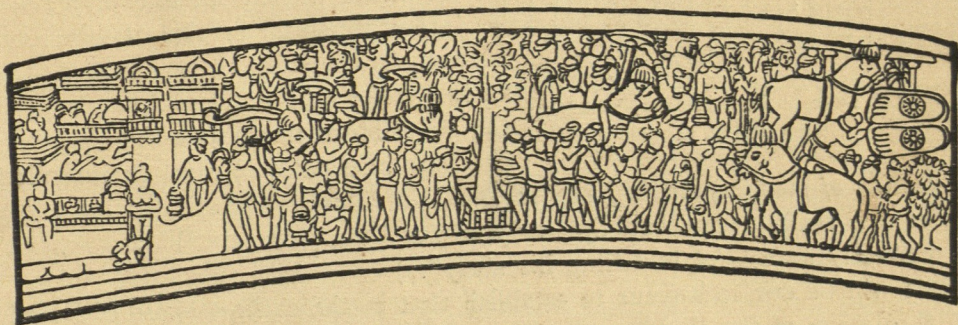
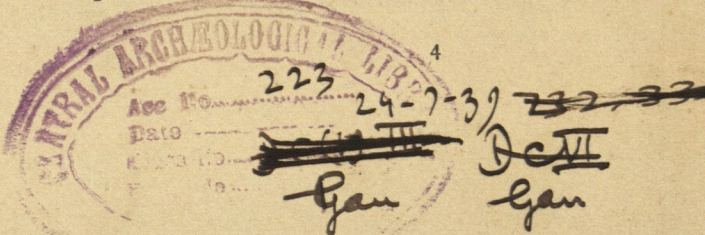


Fig. 1. The Great Departure, Sānci, circa 50 B. C.

by any iconic representation but by the symbol of the Parasol (*Chatra*) indicative of His Spiritual Sovereignty and by two foot-prints. The back of the horse on which He is supposed to be riding is empty (Fig. 1). Likewise in the famous 'Descent from Heaven' depicted on the relief at Bhārhut, the presence of the Buddha is indicated by two foot-prints, one at the top of the stair-case and another at the bottom (Fig. 2). Similarly, in all other representations of the incidents from the Life of the Buddha, in Early Buddhist Art at Mathurā, (Fig. 3) Gayā, (Fig. 4) and Amarāvati (early phase ca. 100 B. C.) (Fig. 5), the portrait of the 'Hero' is missing. On the basis of

¹⁾ "It is easily seen that the significance of the Gāndhāra Art, which through its relative contribution to Classical Archaeology has excited general interest, has been over-estimated and the whole perspective of Indian Art has, in a manner, been displaced." Berthold Laufer, Preface to *Das Citralakṣhaṇa*, Leipzig, 1913.

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this 'significant' omission of the figure of the principal personage in these stories, it has been skilfully argued, with considerable justification, that this must have

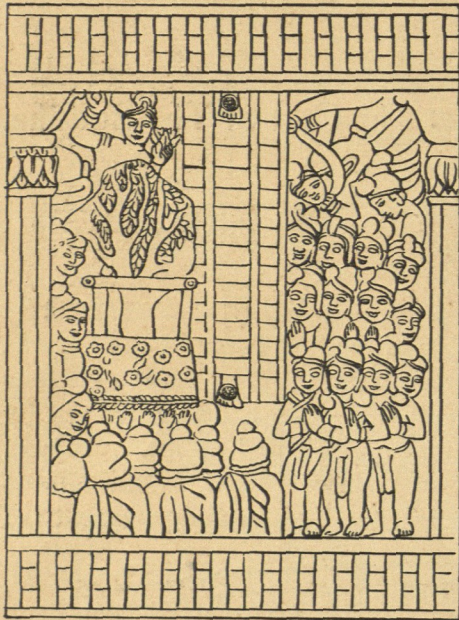


Fig. 2. The Descent from Heaven, Bhārhut, circa 100 B. C.

been due to the 'incapacity' of the native Indian artist to depict the great personality of the Master, or that the omission must have been due to some canonical interdiction, forbidding the image of the 'Great One'. On the other hand, the stone-masons of the Gāndhāra School in seeking to formulate the image of the Buddha were not embarrassed by any such incapacity or interdiction. «Pourtant ils devaient se sentir terriblement gênés par cette incapacité ou cette interdiction d'introduire dans leurs compositions les plus compliquées l'image du héros principal. Les sculptures du Gāndhāra avaient les coudées singulièrement plus franches et, disposant de moyens supérieurs, ne reculaient devant aucune difficulté». ²⁾

In commenting on this passage Coomaraswamy has remarked: "there existed neither an incapacity (the same sculptors represented the Buddha freely as a human being in previous incarnations) nor an interdiction

(for nothing of the kind can be found in Buddhist literature) (the italics are ours) ³⁾, and, as it is readily apparent, the sculptor was by no means embarrassed, but in fact perfectly successful in telling his story". ⁴⁾

It will be our endeavour to establish that in the earliest phase of Buddhist Art, the Image of the Buddha, the Blessed One of Immeasurable Radiance ('Ami-tābha' of later Mahayanist conception) was beyond the capacity of any artist, Indian or Hellenistic, but this incapacity 'was of an entirely different character'. Indeed, in the legend of the *Divyāvadāna* (p. 547) the artists whom King Rudrayāna (Udayāna) commissioned to execute a portrait of the Buddha frankly exclaimed that 'they could not grasp the exemplum of the Blessed One' (*na śaknuvanti Bhagavato nimittam udgrāhitum*). Indeed, it has been the consistent belief in

²⁾ A. Foucher, *Les Bas-Reliefs Gréco-Bouddhiques du Gandhara*, Paris, 1905, Tome I, p. 612. —

³⁾ A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Origin of the Buddha Image*, Art Bulletin, IX, 1927 No. 4, p. 8. — ⁴⁾ It is a matter of some surprise that two eminent scholars like Foucher and Coomaraswamy should have overlooked the passage in the *Brahmajāla-Sutta*, here cited, for the first time, to explain the absence of the figure of the Buddha in the illustrations of the incidents of His Life. L. Vallée Poussin cites the passage ["un Bouddha défunt," "désormais invisible aux dieux et aux hommes"] but interprets the significance differently [*Bouddhisme*, Paris, 1909, p. 206].

all Vedic and post-Vedic thought that the Immeasurable One could never be caught within the limits of measured lineaments. What was possible was to devise a form [more on the models of earlier non-human and super-human types (Yakṣas, Devas, Cakravartins) than on the basis of the portrait of the historical Buddha] which could provide a convenient support for the meditation of the Faithful, or the Lay-Devotee. And it is as an useful aid to devotion, an easy implement of meditation (*dhīyālamba*), or a cosy support for contemplation (*ārambaṇa*), that the image of the Buddha crept into the later developments of Buddhistic doctrine. And when this necessity arose, the image was immediately formulated, as Coomaraswamy has very ably demonstrated, in the *ateliers* of Mathura.

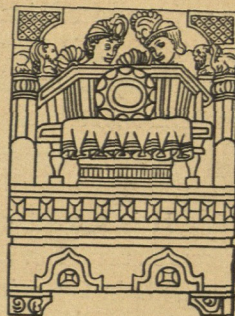


Fig. 3. The Buddha Preaching, Mathurā, circa 50 A. D.

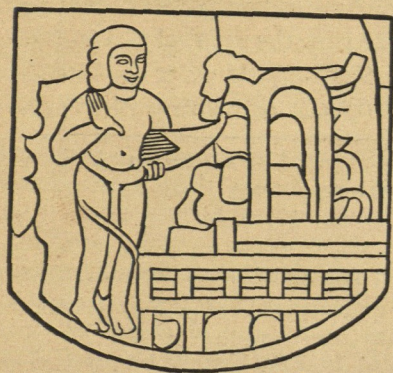


Fig. 4. Visit of Indra, Bodh-gayā, circa 50 B. C.

His figure. From the strictly Hinayānist point of view, it would be a heresy to depict the Invisible One in any visible form, just as, from the strictly aniconic

On the dissolution of the body, beyond the end of his life, neither gods nor men shall see him." 5)

As is well known that this Sutta deals with the most fundamental conceptions of Buddhist doctrines and its canonical authority was too sacred to be despised by any artists who, in view of the above assertion, could never think of attempting to render in visible form — one who has passed into the realm of Invisibility — and was thus incapable of being seen either by gods or men (*deva-manussā*). 6)

Here, then, we have an authoritative explanation why on the reliefs at Sānci and Bhārhut the Buddha's invisibility is suggested by omitting

5) "Ucchinna-bhava-nettiko, bhikkhave, Tathā-gatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati. Yāva'ssa kāyo ṭhassati tāva nam dakkhinti deva-manussā. Kāyassa bhedā uddham jīvita-pariyādānā na dakkhinti deva-manussā." (*Dīgha-Nikāya, Brahmajāla-Sutta*, I, 3, 73, Pali Text Society's Edition, P. 46.) — 6) Commenting on the passage 'that neither gods nor men shall see him', Buddhaghosa (*Sumaṅgala-Vilāsinī*, I, p. 128, remarks that 'He passes into non-apprehensible state' (*apaṇṇattika-bhavaṃ gamissatīti anto*).

conceptions of the Vedas, the Brahma, the Transcendental Being, could not be represented in terms of visible shapes. 7)

But for this indirect injunction, no lack of technical skill or creative genius or any manner of incapacity in Foucher's sense could ever have prevented the native artists of India from rendering the personality of the greatest Spiritual Figure of her history in worthy and adequate Plastic Forms, as the later history of Indian Buddhist Art has so brilliantly demonstrated.

II.

It is a matter of some significance that even after the Image of the Buddha became current in Indian Buddhist Art, in the plastic presentation of the important incidents in the spiritual career of the Master, the canonical and artistic convention of omitting the figure of the Buddha continued for some time. 8)

Similarly on various reliefs of the Amarāvati School, e. g. the Māra-dharṣaṇa scene from Ghaṇṭaśālā, now in the Musée Guimet (reproduced by Migeon in *Eastern Art*, I, Pl. XXI, p. 50) and several Sambodhi scenes from Amarāvati, (one cited here in Fig. 5), the throne with *kulīra-pāda* legs 9) with cushions on which the Buddha is supposed to be seated is empty 10), thus faithfully adhering to the principle enunciated in the *Brahma-jāla-Sutta* cited above. In the relief (Fig. 5), while the two Yakṣas, on either side of the throne, hold in ceremonial poses two parasols over the head of the Invisible Buddha, His presence is indicated by the symbol of the foot-prints below the throne. According to a passage in the *Sutta-nipāta*, after the Buddha was born, 'white parasols were held over His head' (*'Setañ ca chattam dhariyanta*

7) This interdiction in the *Brahma-jāla-Sutta* may be interpreted as a recommendation for artistic convention rather than as a dogmatic doctrinal injunction against any iconic representation of the Buddha. — 8) Foucher has already drawn attention to this interesting fact in his paper 'Les Sculptures d'Amarāvati,' *Revue des Arts Asiatiques*, Tome V, p. 20. — 9) *En passant* it may be remarked that as pointed out by Coomaraswamy, 'Buddhist Reliefs from Nāgārjunikoṇḍa,' *Rūpam*, no. 38—39, p. 72, that this type of chair is earlier than Cullavagga, VI, 2 and 3, consequently one can contend that it cannot be taken as an evidence of alleged influence of the Gāndhāra School on Amarāvati Sculptures, as suggested by Rev. Heras in his paper: 'The origin of the Pallavas,' (*Journal Bombay University*, Vol. V, pt. 4 p. 39). On the other hand, it may be pointed out that from the Hinayānist point of view, it would be a piece of impious heresy to permit a member of a Buddhist Community of Monks, to use a chair, or throne, with legs imitating animal forms. For, according to the same text of the *Brahmajāla-Sutta*, the Buddha himself had ordained that pious monks (Śramaṇas) should not use chairs designed with animal forms: "Gotama, the Recluse, refrains from the use of such things e. g. divans with animal figures carved on the supports" (*Pallāṅko ti pādesu vāla-rūpāni thapetvā kato*). — 10) In the well-known Nativity scene from Nāgārjunikoṇḍa (Fig. 6) the figure of the baby born is omitted and its presence is suggested by foot-prints on the Benares Cloth held by the four archangels. As in this incident in the *Nālaka-sutta*, so in other analogous scenes and incidents, as for instance in the *Abhiniṣkramaṇa* scene on the Sānci lintel, cited in Fig. 2, the 'holder of the parasol' (*Chatta-gāhaka*) over the head of the Buddha supposed to be riding on the horse is likewise invisible. This passage in the *Nālaka-sutta* therefore clearly explains the curious representation of the Parasol in various early Buddhist reliefs, without indicating the person holding the same.

muddhani', 689). But the gods who held them aloft were invisible: "A canopy (parasol) aloft the gods up-held with ribs of gold to spread the thousand widths of its expanse, while fans were waved on wands of gold; yet none could see, who held or waved". (Lord Chalmers' translation).¹¹ Here, the table is turned, for while in this relief the holders of the parasol are visible, the personage honored is invisible. Any-how, this sculptural convention of sometimes omitting personages taking part in a story or incident (be he a god holding a parasol, or the Buddha Himself, the principal hero of the drama) is explained and justified by canonical tradition.

The Nativity scenes (of which there are three examples at Nāgārjunikōṇḍa), demonstrate that, as late as the third century A. D. this canonical and artistic convention was still persisting on the same monument where the Buddha is represented in iconic forms on numerous reliefs, in fact, at a time, centuries after the representation and the worship of the Image of the Buddha



Fig. 5. Buddha's Enlightenment, Amarāvati, circa 100 A. D.

had firmly established itself in Buddhist doctrines and cults. So late a survival of the earlier mode of illustrating the Life, by omitting the figure of the hero, may be due to a respect for a hoary and pious tradition which later artists had not the courage to traverse. On the other hand, it may be argued, that ever since the advent of the Sarvāstivādins the two methods of representing the life, (an-iconic and iconic), must have existed side by side. Indeed, in strict accordance with Theravādi doctrine, even the memorial mounds (*Uddeśikacaityas*) in honour of the memory of the Exalted One, after He had passed into Nirvāṇa, would be an illogical absurdity. And King Milinda exactly clinches the point when he heckles Nāgasena with the query: 'what is the good of setting up a mound to contain the jewel-treasure of the Corporal Relics (*Śarīradhātu*) of the Tathāgata by way of reverence, or gift,' 'though he has died away and accepts it not?'¹² For, did He not say 'Hinder not yourselves, Ānanda, by honouring the remains of the Thathāgata?'¹³ Nāgasena explains the riddle by expounding the edifying merits of erecting caityas and other acts of worship and reverence (*pūjā*) of the Departed One (*Parinibbutassa Tathāgatassa*) as seeds for inspiration of the devotees. "It is for all these reasons that even when the Buddha has passed

¹¹) "Aneka-sākhāṇ ca sahasa-maṇḍalam chattaṃ marū dhārayum antalikkhe, suvaṇṇa-dandā vṭṭipātanti cāmarā; na dissare cāmara-chatta-gāhaka." *Sutta-nipāta*, Nālaka-Sutta, 688, Chalmers' Edition, H. O. S. Vol. 37, p. 166—167. — ¹²) *Milinda-pañha*, Rhys, Davids' translation, S. B. E. Vol. 35, 1, pp. 144—147. — ¹³) *ibid.*, p. 246.

away an act done to him *notwithstanding his not consenting thereto*, is still of value and bears fruit." Yet throughout His life, Buddha had generally withhold His consent to any manner of worship of Himself as a personal god, though He could not resist the popular tendency to pay tributes and reverence to his own Personality.

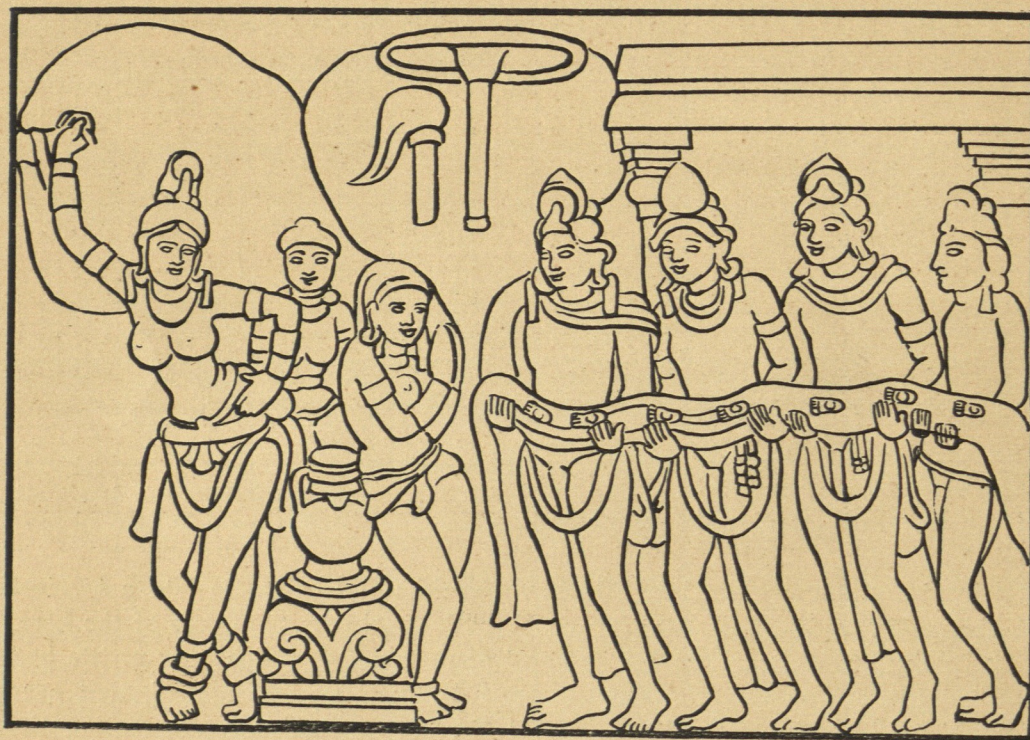


Fig. 6. Nativity Scene, Nāgārjunikōṇḍa, circa 3rd Century A. D.

Incessant streams of devotees would come, every day, with offerings of flowers and fragrance to render tributes to the Buddha. When He happened to be away, the presents of garlands and flowers had to be left in a room which came to be known as *gandha-kuṭī*, ('Hall of Fragrance', or 'Perfumed Chamber') and in course of time numerous repositories of such floral tributes grew up but the original 'Hall of Fragrance' (*mūla-gandha-kuṭī*) at the old monastery of Saranath has been dug up and identified.¹⁴) The *gandha-kuṭī* at Jetavana is represented in a relief from Bhārhut.¹⁵) Various other Shrines of Fragrance were donated by pious donors as acts of merit, and were used by the Buddha as Preaching Hall, or Teaching Dormitory.

¹⁴) Annual Report, Archaeological Survey of India, 1906—07, pp. 97—98. It was probably, originally, a structure of masonry, rebuilt into a stone shrine (*Śilā-gandha-kuṭīm*) by King Mahāpāla in 1083 Samvat. — ¹⁵) Cunningham, *Bhārhut*, p. 87, Pl. LVII

During the dispensation of Vipassi Buddha, a householder named Avaroja built a *gandha-kuṭī* for the Buddha.¹⁶⁾ Likewise, during the time of Buddha Gotama, Aparājita, a householder of Bandhumatī, built a *gandha-kuṭī* for the Teacher and announced: "Reverend Sir, the Perfumed Chamber is completed; I desire the Teacher to make use of it, for, as we know, abundant merit results from the use of it".¹⁷⁾ Revata, the brother of Sāriputta, living in a forest, was visited by the Buddha. As soon as the former heard that the Buddha was approaching, Revata created by magic a Perfumed Chamber for the Exalted One. The latter spent an entire month there as his guest.¹⁸⁾ During the dispensation of Buddha Kassapa, a treasurer (*śreṣṭhi*) named Sumaṅgala built a Perfumed Chamber and having done so presented it to the Teacher and his retinue.¹⁹⁾ Anyhow these *gandha-kuṭīs* must have been the nucleus of future Buddha-Shrines, or Temples (*Pūjānīya-ṭṭhāna*) and provided indirect aids to personal adoration and were the seeds of personal worship. For a substitute for personal worship, the Bodhi-Tree was set up by Ānanda with the authority of the Buddha, during His Life-time, if the story in the *Kālinga-bodhi-Jātaka* can claim any historical authority. In addition to these popular concessions to personal worship, we have several legends, suggesting reverential monuments having been set up during the lifetime of the Buddha.²⁰⁾

At the sequel of the Vaka-Jātaka, a conversation is recorded between the Buddha and Bimbisāra: "When you are gone, O Blessed One, I shall be unable to do you honour, I shall be unable to make you the customary offerings and it will grieve me. Give me a lock of your hair, give me the pairings of your finger-nails, I shall place them in a temple in the midst of my palace. Thus I shall retain something that is part of you and each day, I shall decorate the temple (*Caitya*) with fresh garlands and I shall burn rare incense." The Blessed One gave the King these things for which he had asked, and he said: "Take my hair and take these pairings: keep them in a temple, but in your mind keep what I have taught you."²¹⁾ Here also, the Buddha appears to insist on attention to the substance of His teachings rather than a worship of His own Personality, just as in the *Mahāparinibbāna-Sutta* (II, 26): "Hold fast to the doctrine as your

¹⁶⁾ *Dhamma-padāttha-kathā*, III, p. 364ff.; Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends*, H. O. S. Vol. 30, p. 131. — ¹⁷⁾ Ibid., Vol. 30, p. 316. — ¹⁸⁾ Ibid., Vol. 29, p. 212. — ¹⁹⁾ Ibid., Vol. 29, p. 302. — ²⁰⁾ Jātaka Text, IV, 228. — ²¹⁾ English Translation as given by A. F. Herold, *The Life of the Buddha*, London, 1929, p. 161. The evidentiary value of this text is considerably discounted by the fact that in the version in Fausbøll's text of the Vaka Jātaka, this passage does not occur. . . A variant of this anecdote, however, occurs in the Śrīmātī-Avadāna (*Avadāna Śatakam*, no. 54), in which at the request of the ladies of the seraglio of Bimbisāra, the King obtains the hair and nails of the Buddha and "set up a stūpa inside the seraglio at which the ladies performed their worship with the aids of lamp, incense, flowers, fragrance, wreaths and paste." Hiuen Tsang refers to the story of the First disciples "asking for some object of worship," for which the Buddha delivered to them some of his hair and nails on which they built stūpas according to the model prescribed by the Buddha (Beal, *Buddhist Records*, I, p. 47—48) — Various Hair-relic (*Keśa-dhātu*) stūpas have been identified. In Viśākhā, "there is also a nail and hair stūpa" (ibid., i. p. 240).

Refuge. Look not for Refuge to anyone else besides yourselves." Like-wise, Nāgasena, in explaining the injunction of the Buddha to King Menander (ca. 155 B. C.) that the real seeker after truth should undertake self-discipline and contemplation rather than worship of the relics (*śarīra-pūjā*) of the Buddha, winds up the discourse by saying: "And if, O King, he had not said so, then would the Bhikkus have taken his bowl and his robe, and occupied themselves with paying reverence to the Buddha, through them" (*Milinda-Pañha*, Rhys Davids' Translation, p. 248). As a matter of fact, both the cult of the Bowl (*pātra*) and the cult of the jewelled turban (*cūdā-maṇi*) and the Hair-relic (*keśa-dhātu*) grew up later, and are represented in early Buddhist monuments.²²⁾

That Buddha has been systematically trying to rebuke and suppress the popular tendency to build up a cult of His Image, is borne out by various texts. Thus in the story of Attadattha the Elder, He says: "For truly they honour me not who honour me with perfumes and garlands. They only honour me who fulfil the higher and the lower law."²³⁾ The same idea is repeated in a much later text, that of the *Vajra-chedika-sūtra*: "He who looks for me, i. e. for the true Tathāgata, through any material form, or seeks me through any audible sound (one might add, any visible form) that man has entered on an erroneous course, and shall never behold the Tathāgata."

Yet the popular demand for a personal worship was steadily developing during the life-time of the Lord. And *a priori*, there is nothing improbable in the incidents relating to the growth of the seeds of personal worship. Indeed, some of His own utterances lent themselves to equivocal interpretations which could have been and may have been used as justification of the worship of His Image. In the *Samyutta Nikāya* He is reported to have said: "Indeed, Vakkali, whoever perceives (realises) the Doctrine (Truth), perceives Me, and Whoever looks at Me, looks at the Doctrine"²⁴⁾. Nāgasena explains the passage thus: "Just so, great king, whosoever sees what the truth is, he sees what the Blessed One was, for the Truth was preached by the Blessed One."²⁵⁾

But the words could be easily used, as they were undoubtedly used, later, for justifying the worship of the Image of the Buddha, for the Adoration of the Buddha was to the lay-devotees equivalent to the reverence of the Doctrine.

Of such interpretation easy confirmation could be cited by such legends as the one in the *Divyāvadāna*, where the Buddha himself caused His Portrait to be

²²⁾ Vogel, "La Sculpture de Mathura", *Ars Asiatica*, XV, Pls. LV. LVI; Cunningham, *Bhārhut*, Pl. XVI; Marshall, *A Guide to Sanchi*, Pl. VI, a. — ²³⁾ E. W. Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends*, H. O. S., Vol. 29, p. 360.

²⁴⁾

"*Alaṃ Vakkali kiṃ te imina pūtikāyena diṭṭhena
Yo kho Vakkali dhammam passati, so mam passati
Yo mam passati, so dhammam passati*".

Samyutta-Nikāya Text, Edited by L. Feer, Pt. III, p. 120, Cp. also *Majjhima-Nikāya*, I, pp. 190—91. I am indebted for the reference to Dr. B. C. Law. According to Philo of Alexandria: "The World is the *Eikon* of God." — ²⁵⁾ Rhys Davids' Translation, S. B. E. Vol. XXXV, p. 110.

sent to Roruka with the additional injunction that a long procession should be led with the Portrait displayed through the streets especially adorned for the purpose (*mārgaśobhā*) and the Portrait should be unveiled with elaborate ceremonies (*mahatīm pūjām satkāraṃ kṛtvā udghātayitavyam*). This injunction was carried out with appropriate pomp and ceremonies and undoubtedly 'excited', (as the text suggests elsewhere), 'popular imagination' (*laukikam cittam utpādayitum*). "For, at the place arrived a company of traders from Central India, who, on seeing the image, with one voice sang out a chorus of exclamation: "Adoration to the Buddha!" On hearing this the populace gathered at the show experienced feelings of horripilation." ²⁶⁾ The seed of image-worship was indeed sown, on that occasion. For, every-body present must have said, on the occasion, borrowing the words of Dhaniyā Gopa, the prosperous herdsman, recorded in the *Sutta nipāta* (I, 2, 31): "We come, O! Lord, for refuge unto Thee of Divine Insight!" ("*Saranam tam upema, Cakkhuma!*").

An analogous anecdote is cited in the later collection of legends that of the *Avadāna-Kalpalatā* (VII, verses 55, 59, 61—69), where the Buddha is said to have sent a Portrait of Himself (with inscribed verses indicating the doctrine), to Princess Mukta-latā of Ceylon through the agency of a group of merchants. In this case, also, the sight of the Effigy achieved analogous psychological effect, for, "when the princess placed the portrait on a golden throne, the populace lost themselves in a contemplative unison with the Effigy, and the Princess on contemplating on the sacred portrait of the Conqueror (*Jina*), abjured all desires for an endless period of time." ²⁷⁾

Very probably these were late legends devised and designed later, to lend authenticity of lineage to the images when they were evolved later on, just as texts recommending merits accruing from image-worship were composed later and ascribed to the Buddha himself.

But the legend of Sthavira Upagupta and Māra and the dramatic presentation of the Visible Form of the Buddha that Māra showed to the Patriarch is related with many significant details describing Upagupta's reaction to the sight, which suggests that a necessity for presenting the Image of the Departed One must have already arisen and may have been fulfilled by enterprising artists, though such practices may not have yet earned canonical sanction. Upagupta beseeches Māra to show him the Form-Body (*rūpakāya*): "The Buddha has entered into Nirvāṇa a hundred

²⁶⁾ "Madhya-deśād vaṇijāḥ paṇyam ādāya tatānuṣṭhāpāḥ tair Buddha-pratimām dṛṣṭvā ekaraveṇa nādo mukto: Namo Buddhāya iti tasya Buddha ity āśrutapūrvam ghoṣam śrutvā sarva-roma-kūpāny āhyṣṭāni." Cowell & Neil's Edition, p. 548.

²⁷⁾

"Hema-siṃhāsana-nyaste paṭe dṛṣṭvā Tathāgataṃ
Janas tanmayatā-dhyānād ekī-bhāvam ivā-yayau. 64
Jina-pratīkṛtīm puṇyām paśyanti pāṛthivā-tanajā I
Anādi-kāloṇācītāṃ mumocāññāna-vāsanām". 69

Bodhisattva-Avadāna-Kalpa-latā, VII, Bibl. Indica Edition.

years ago, I am familiar with His Body of Doctrine (*dharmakāya*), but I have not seen the physical body of that Lord of the Three Worlds resplendent as the shining mountain.”²⁸⁾ When the venerable divine is face to face with the presentation, he is thrown into an ecstasy (*prāmodayam utpannam*) and mechanically rises from his seat and in adoration “joins his palms even in the form of lotus-buds”, and, overpowered by the beauty of the Form (*Aho! Rūpa-śobhā Bhagavatah*), bursts forth in laudatory verses extolling the Purity of the Vision (*amalam rūpam*) attractive to the eyes of the populace (*jana-netra-kāntam*). “Cursed be the ruthless law of Impermanence which destroys Form of such Beauty as this. Alas! that such body of that Great Sage should dissolve into impermanence!”. With these words, the Patriarch fell down in a senseless trance. The aesthetic efficacy of a worshipper’s image was undoubtedly demonstrated on this occasion. The object of the legend, whatever its date, was to prove the efficacy of Images, which had not come yet into use at the time of Aśoka.²⁹⁾

III.

Now, it is the object of our enquiry as to when the Cult of the Buddha-image took its birth. Ever since the death of the Buddha, the worship of the stūpa enshrining his bodily relics has been current following a pre-Buddhistic practice of erecting memorial mounds in honour of great personages such as Emperors and Saints (*Cakra-vartins* and *Arhats*). This ancient practice received additional impetus from Aśoka who is supposed to have exploited the original relics (enshrined in the Eight Stūpas related in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, *Dīgha-Nikāya*, VI, 27—28), — and took a vow to set up 84000 memorial mounds with which the Royal patron is, indeed, said to have “bejewelled the face of the Earth”.³⁰⁾ Yet at a very early epoch in the history of Buddhism, various dissenting Sects (e. g. the Aparaseliyas, the Uttaraseliyas and the Mahīśāsakas) had announced that “Even if one makes offerings to a stūpa one cannot acquire great fruits (merits)”.³¹⁾ Notwithstanding such dissension, the setting up of stūpas went on continuously through the centuries with unabated enthusiasm, as evidenced by numerous monuments in India, Ceylon, Burma, Central Asia, and Indonesia. It is quite probable, therefore, that notwithstanding the dissentient views of the Theravādins, images of the Buddha might have been favoured by other sects e. g. the Sarvāstivādins. And before cult-images were established dogmatic sanction must have preceded such practice. In the legend of the *Divyāvadāna*, where Bimbisāra sent the Portrait to Rudrāyaṇa of Roruka, there is no dogmatic assertion that the worship of the Buddha image will bring in

²⁸⁾ *Divyāvadāna*, p. 360. — ²⁹⁾ As A. Gawronski has shown in his *Studies about Sanskrit Buddhist Literature* 1919, pp. 49—56, the *Divyāvadāna* was compiled from different sources and its various portions cannot be assigned to one definite epoch. The legend in question may be much earlier than the date of its compilation. — ³⁰⁾ “*Yat-prabhāvena vasudhā ratna-caityāṃkītā-bhavaṭ*”, *Avadāna-Kalpalatā*, I, verse 57. — ³¹⁾ J. Masuda: “Origin & Doctrines of Early Buddhist Schools”, *Asia Major*, Vol. II, 1925, p. 38, p. 63.

spiritual merit, but there is a stray passage, suggesting the seed of the idea: — “The portrait is to be placed in an area of extensive dimension (*visṭīrṇa-avakāṣe pradeśe*), (evidently to attract a crowd), and be unveiled with great ceremonies. If this is done acquisition of great merit will belong to you (Rudrāyaṇa).”³²) This appears to be a novel application of the principle already enunciated by Him that “Whoever gazes at me gazes at my doctrine”. But on this occasion, the Buddha was not content with sending an effigy only. He directed a couple of verses (*gāthā-dvayam*) to be added on the portrait, one of which averred: “Whoever roams within the orbit of this discipline of the Doctrine, without lapse (or deviation) shall put an end to all miseries by avoiding the cycle of births.”³³) We have not, therefore, yet come to the stage — when the cult of the Buddha image could stand for spiritual efficacy, by itself, un-aided by words of dogmatic promise, such as, for instance, suggested by a late text “that the sight of the Lord is itself conducive to accretion of wisdom”.³⁴)

According to early Theravādi views, even the incidents of the Life of the Buddha were not allowed to be exploited by an actor for artistic and edifying purposes, as appears from a legend in the Kan-gyur, first cited by Coomaraswamy.³⁵) “One day there came an actor from the South, with the intention of discovering something whereby he might amuse the company and obtain a large reward for himself. He hoped to attain both ends, if he glorified the most excellent of men.” He wanted to get particulars of the anecdotes of the Life of the Buddha in order to weave them into a drama. So he took himself to Nanda (? Ananda) and asked for the particulars. Nanda asked: “What do you want it for?” The actor replied “Venerable Sir, I wish to compose a drama”. Nanda said: “Wretched man, do you wish us to portray the Teacher for you? Begone, for I will tell you nothing.” And Aśvaghōṣa, in publishing his *Saundarānanda-Kāvya* in the artistic form and conventions of Epic Poetry had, therefore, to offer elaborate apologies for using the incidents of the Life as material for his Epic: “This poem, dealing thus with the theme of Salvation, has been composed in the form of Classical poetry *not to give pleasure*, but to further the attainment of tranquility and with the intention of attracting hearers devoted to other topics.”³⁶)

It may be justly contended that, when the Life of the Buddha was permitted to be used as material for Epic Poetry, or Drama, shortly before the time of Aśvaghōṣa, the interdiction against the anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha must have been withdrawn. Beal in his Introduction (p. xxi) to his translation of the Chinese version of the *Buddha-carita*³⁷) has drawn attention to the fact that

³²) “*Tatas-ī mahataḥ puṇyasya avāptir bhaviṣyati*,” *Divyāvadāna*, p. 548. — ³³) Similarly to the Sinhalese Princess Muktālatā a writing was sent along with the effigy. — ³⁴) “*Yat-kāraṇam Jinendrasya darśanam jñāna-varadhanam*”, *Ārya-Gaṇḍa-vyūha*, cited in *Śikṣā-Samuccaya*, P. 310, line 22. — ³⁵) Schiefner's *Tibetan Tales*, No. XIII, p. 243 (transl. by Ralston). — ³⁶) See the two additional verses 62, 63, at the end of Canto XVIII, of the *Saundarānanda Kāvya*, Johnston's Edition, Punjab University, 1932. — ³⁷) Sacred Book of the East, Vol. XIX. “It is possible that the emissaries, who left China A. D. 64 and returned A. D. 67, may have brought back with them some

a Life of the Buddha (Fo-pen-hing-King) was translated into Chinese by Ku-Fa-lan (Gobharaṇa) in 68 A. D.³⁸) It is impossible to say, if this early Life of Buddha was the *Buddha-carita* of Aśva-ghoṣa. If Ku-Fa-lan had translated Aśva-ghoṣa's epic and if some interval has to be allowed between the composition of the Epic and its popularity and fame to have reached China, the date of its composition has to be placed about the end of the First century B. C. If Ku-Fa-lan had translated a Life of the Buddha earlier than that of Aśvaghōṣa, it must have been composed, like that of Aśvaghōṣa, for aesthetic and edifying purposes. In either case, it points to a period of devotional theism, when the primitive repugnance to the use and exploitation of the incidents of Buddha's life for aesthetic purposes (as proved by the earlier story of the actor in *Tibetan Tales*) had disappeared.

And it is reasonable to expect that by this time some Sutras in the form of authoritative canonical texts recommending the merits to accrue from the worship of the image of the Buddha should have come into existence about 50 B. C. if not earlier, that is to say just after the four gateways of the Sānchi Stūpa (No. 1) had been completed. *A priori* there would be nothing against the supposition that even during the time the gateways at Sānchi were being carved, the worship of the image may have crept into Buddhist beliefs. For, as we have pointed out above, even after iconic representations became current under the sanction of dogmatic authorities, aniconic symbolic representations of the Buddha continued for some time, as proved by some of the reliefs at Amarāvati. And before the image of the Buddha could be introduced into Orthodox Buddhist worship and devotional practices, some authority had to be sought sanctioning the making and worshipping of images.

Evidence of this is afforded by the introductory passages in the Sanskrit texts³⁹) relating to the canons of image-making. The topic of having effigies for the adoration during the absence of the Lord is very skilfully introduced, through Śāri-putta at a very opportune moment, when the Lord after an absence of about a month returned from the Tuṣita Heaven, and the absence must have caused uneasy feelings in the hearts of His devotees and made them anxious to devise a means to

knowledge of the work of Aśvaghōṣa called Fo-pen-hing or of the original then circulating in India on which Aśvaghōṣa founded his poem."

³⁸) Unfortunately, this early translation by Fan-lan (not Fa-lin) under the title of *Fo-pen-hing-King* is not cited by Nanjio in his *Catalogue* which mentions (p. 301) a later translation by Dharmarakṣa (414 A. D.). Professor P. C. Bagchi (*Le Canon Bouddhique en Chine*, T. I., p. 6) suspects the authenticity of this early life of the Buddha. — ³⁹) None in the Pāli language has been traced so far. And the absence of relative Pāli Texts may be proof of the fact that image-making did not come into existence before the First Century A. D. Some of these texts have been edited and published. Sanskrit texts, one under the title of *Pratimā-māna-lakṣaṇa* has been edited and published by P. Bose, Lahore, and another by J. N. Banerjee under the title *Pratimā-lakṣaṇam* (Calcutta University, 1932). There are other analogous texts still unpublished in the Cambridge collection of Buddhist Mss. (C. Bendall: *Catalogue of Buddhist Sanskrit Mss.*, Cambridge, 1883, pp. 200—203). A text called *Kriyā-samuccaya* extracted by J. N. Banerjee in Appendix C, comments on the text of the *Pratimālakṣaṇa*.

provide for such emergencies. The text runs as follows: — “Om Salutation to Buddha! The Lord Buddha was (at the time) staying at Jētavana. At the time of His return from the sacred Tuṣita heaven after teaching the Dharma to His mother, Śāriputta asked the Lord: “Oh Lord! When you go (elsewhere) or attain utter despiration (*parinirvāṇa*), how are you to be adored by the noble and devoted disciple (of yours)?” The Master replied: “Oh Śāriputra! When I go (elsewhere) or attain utter despiration, my image (body) should be fashioned after the measure of the Banyan Tree (i. e.) the length of the body to be equal to the compass of the outstretched arms. ⁴⁰⁾ For the purpose of worship and adoration (my) image should be made.” Here we have the sanction for image-worship purporting to emanate from the lips of the Lord Himself!

This so-called sanction, authority and justification for the image is introduced in these Sculptors' canons, parenthetically, as the texts themselves are concerned primarily with the measurements, peculiarities, and characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) of the Buddha-image. They are not, therefore, the texts proper recommending the worship of the image. Indeed, independent texts prescribing spiritual merits to accrue from image-worship must have preceded the texts formulating the lineaments and measurements of the image. These latter texts came long after the first image of the Buddha was formulated and created by the artist. Once the first image was formulated, the necessity arose to preserve and transmit the accuracy and integrity of the plastic conception, through the hands of successive image-makers (*Pratimā-kāraṇās*), sculptors, or painters, so that from the worshipper's point of view the identity and accuracy of the formulated conception could be secured and transmitted without any variation. The worshipper's image must conform to one accepted and agreed figuration, and could not be allowed to lend itself to different patterns or formulations according to the individual caprices of different artists. This holds good in the Mathura as well as in the Gāndhāra School. The type, model, or pattern of the image in all details is strictly adhered to and followed by successive artists as a sacred formulation which could not be deviated from, according to individual fancy. The necessity for this preservation and continuation of an accepted precedent was probably secured by measured working drawings and diagrams, from the hand-book of the Master-Sculptor who first designed the lineaments of the Buddha-image — such as we see in the line-drawings incorporated in the Tibetan and Chinese editions of the sculptors' hand-books of the canons of image-making. These working drawings were later worked into a text-book of measurements for the accepted Buddha-Image.

So, that it will be seen that the texts on the Canons of image-making came into existence, much later than the time when the first image was formulated, and

⁴⁰⁾ Dialogues of the Buddha, Part II, p. 15.

very much later, (perhaps a century later) than the time when the worship of the Image was accepted as an agreed form of adoration in the Buddhist Church.⁴¹⁾

If we now search for texts recommending the worship of the image, we find the surviving texts on the topic are not very old.

In a prose passage in the *Mahāvastu*, for the first time occurs a line recommending merits to the worshipper of the Tathāgata: "O, Bhikṣu! Whoever renders ritualistic adorations (*satkāram*) to the Tathāgata thus purified (?) by means of wreaths of flowers, fragrance, festoons and flags and music and by besmearing (the image?) with fragrant paste, one cannot measure the limits of his spiritual merits."⁴²⁾

Then follows another passage in the same Section which is somewhat obscure and which appears to suggest that the merit of honouring Him with ritual worship while He is still alive and tarrying on this earth (*etarahi tiṣṭhantam*), is the same as worshipping Him when He has utterly passed away (*pari-nirvṛtasya*). This is followed by a citation of the whole of the *Avalokana Sūtra*, which principally deals with details of merits which accrue to one who sets up stūpas, circumambulates stūpas, decorates stūpas, offers lamps to stūpas, offers wreaths of flower to stūpas, cleanses or renovates stūpas, and so on. This sūtra is principally concerned with recommending merits for the various forms of the worship of the stūpa, and apparently belongs to a time when the cult of the Buddha-image had not come into existence. But amidst the long strings of verses covering several pages (362—397), there occurs a stray verse (somewhat obscure) which appears to suggest a ritual worship of the image of the Buddha with fragrant paste: "He who makes a special worship of the Lord by means of paste and accompanied by pleasant musical sound, he roams in the all the worlds, by achieving his purpose as a consequence of having offered noble fragrance (to the image?)."⁴³⁾

The *Avalokana Sūtra* is also quoted at length in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, a compilation of the eighth century, and Senart thinks that the Sūtra is an interpolation in the *Mahāvastu*.

But if we compare the two recensions of the text of the Sūtra as quoted in the *Mahāvastu* and in the *Śikṣā-samuccaya*, it is apparent that the text quoted in the latter work is a more developed version and the Sūtra itself is very probably much

⁴¹⁾ It is quite possible that the effigy of the Buddha had been adored by lay-worshippers long before the cult of the image was accepted in Orthodox forms of worship. — ⁴²⁾ "Evam pariśuddhasya Bhikṣo Tathāgatasya yaḥ satkāram kuryyāt puṣpa-mālya-gandha-dhvaja-patākāhi vādyā-anulepanehi na tasya puṇyasya śakyam paryantam adhigantum I" *Mahāvastu* (Senart's Edition), Tome II, p. 362. Lines 6—8.

⁴³⁾

*Anulepena Bhagavato yo karoti
Pūjām viśiṣṭām sumanojña-ghoṣām,
So labdha-lābho vicarati sarva-loke
Ādinna-sāro (?) vara-gandha datvā."*

Mahāvastu, T. II, P. 387, lines 21—24.

earlier than the estimated date of the earlist portion of the *Mahāvastu* (about first century A. D.).⁴⁴⁾

In a verse in the *Sūtra*, which does not occur in the Tibetan Version but which occurs in the recension cited in the *Samuccaya*, we find an interesting recommendation for the worship of the Buddha with flowers: "He who out of the fullness of his passionate heart, takes up a handful of flowers and throws out and showers the same with elated feelings, on the Lord of the World (*Loka-nātha*), he acquires a life of merit in the world of human beings."⁴⁵⁾

This laudatory prescription of worshipping the Buddha with a shower of flowers appears in a somewhat archaistic and extravagant form in a prose passage in the *Ārya-Mahā-Karuṇa-Puṇḍarīka-Sūtra* (of uncertain date) also cited in the *Samuccaya* collection: — "Let alone the man, Ānanda, who should reverence me face to face; let alone worship of my bodily relics with things no bigger than a leaf of mustard; let alone the dedication to me of builded shrines; whosoever, Ānanda, thinking of the Buddha, shall cast into the air only one flower — the ripening of their mass of merit is that these people as long as the transmigration which has no beginning, the former end of which is not known, who pass through so many ages, of the place of Indra, of Brahmā, of a Chakravarti — the limit of this merit cannot be reached. Let alone the thought of the Buddha, even the throwing of just one single flower into the air, if even persons only in sleep throw into the air but one flower thinking of the Buddha, that I declare to be a root of good, which issues in Nirvāṇa."⁴⁶⁾ Whatever the date of this text, it embodies a stage in the theistic development of Buddhism — which has not yet ripened into an actual image-worship, for, here, the recommendation is to throw a flower — in honour of Him, *not* necessarily at His Image. We get a glimpse, here, of the process by which the Buddhist devotees were gradually being led to the stage of image-worship. The verses cited above are stray passages in the text exclusively relating to the worship of the stūpa, which was the earlier cult, before the introduction of the cult of the Image. The firm establishment of the cult-image must have been preceded or accompanied by canonical authority of a special text justifying the worship of the Image (*pratibimba*) of the Tathāgata, by promising 'happy reward' for making or setting up His images. This is what we exactly find in a group of *Sūtra*-texts, which prescribe 'happy reward' or spiritual merits accruing from the pious act of setting up images for worship.

⁴⁴⁾ Some portions of the *Mahāvastu* (as pointed out by Keith in his introductory Note to Dr. B. C. Law's *A Study of the Mahāvastu*, VII) must be as late as the third Century A. D. —

⁴⁵⁾ "Yaḥ puṣpa-muṣṭi gṛhītvogra-cittaḥ prasādato 'vakirati Lokanāthe,
Sa puṇyavān bhavati manuṣya-loke rākṣe (?) ca sthītā Jina satkaroti."
Śikṣā-Samuccaya, Bib. Buddhica. Text Edited by Speyer, 39).

⁴⁶⁾ Adapted from the translation of Bendall & Rouse, *Indian Text Series*, London, I, 22.

Three sūtra texts are known under the title of *Tathāgata-pratibimba-pratiṣṭhānā-nuśamsā* (Sūtra relating to the Edict for setting up of the image of the Buddha) embodied in the Chinese Sūtra-pitaka. 47)

One of these (No. 289 in Nanjio's *Catalogue*) was translated into Chinese during the Eastern Han dynasty (A. D. 25—220).

These texts must have, therefore, been current in India probably before 25 A. D. and very probably at or before 50 B. C. to which date the earliest surviving example of the Buddha image (that of the Bimaran reliquary) has been assigned. For having regard to the canonical discouragement of any iconic representation of the Buddha (*Brahma-jāla sūta*), it is unreasonable to postulate that Buddhist worshippers could have taken to, or tolerated image-worship before any recommendatory texts were found to sanction such worship.

It is reasonable to conclude that the earliest of these texts sanctioning and recommending image-worship had very probably been composed some time during the early part of the Pre-Christian century (*circa* 1—50 B. C.). And there is nothing inherently improbable in the first image of the Buddha having been carved or painted sometime before 50 B. C.

IV.

If we now turn from literary to monumental testimony, we find that the two earliest surviving examples of Buddha Images — in the Sarnath Museum one of Friar Bala (dated A. D. 81), and the other a head-less torso (Bachhofer Pl. 80), which Bachhofer dates earlier than A. D. 81 — are by no means the earliest to represent the Buddha in plastic forms; and stylistically they represent mature and developed forms of earlier representations, for their decisive posing and gestures unmistakably bespeak an already affixed pattern at a distance from the *earliest* nascent form. The Mathurā image reveals a fixed iconography with the poses definitely designed, for instance, with the right-hand raised in a reassuring gesture and the

47) These three texts are listed in Nanjio's *Catalogue* at col. 75, No. 288 Tā-shan-tsāo-siān-kun-tōh-kin. "Sūtra of the Mahāyāna on the good qualities or virtue of making the images (of Buddha)." *Tathāgata-pratibimba-pratiṣṭhānuśamsā*.

No. 289. Fo-shwo-tso-fo-hhin-siān-kin. Sūtra spoken by Buddha on making Buddha's images. *Tathāgata-pratibimba-pratiṣṭhānuśamsā*.

No. 290. Fo-shwo-tso-li-hhin-sian-fu-pao-kin. "Sūtra spoken by Buddha on the happy reward of making or setting up (Buddha's) images."

A somewhat different but analogous text obviously later in date is suggested by the title: "Li-leu-hwui-phu-sā-su-wan-li-fo-fā-kin" ('Sūtra on the law of the worship of Buddha, asked by the Fodhisattva Vimalajña' (listed as No. 521 in Nanjio's *Catalogue*) translated into Chinese by Nadi in A. D. 663.

The Tibetan versions of these texts are indicated by A. Csoma Körösi in his '*Analysis of the Mdo*'. Kahgyur, V. *Asiatic Researches*, XX, 1836, p. 476). No. 17 *Tathāgata-pratibimba-pratiṣṭhānuśamsā*, Tib. De'bzhin-gshegs pahi-gzugs-br-nyam-gzhag-pahi-p'han-yon.

"the advantages arising from laying up (or keeping) the image of Thathāgata: told by Shakya."

left-hand placed on the hip (Fig. 7).⁴⁸) This peculiar pose with the conventional treatment of the drapery, and the folds indicated on the left arm only, are definite evidence of already developed iconographic peculiarities. So that the earliest of the

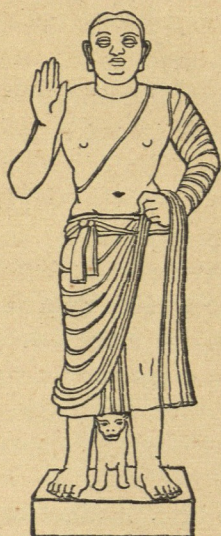


Fig. 7. Image of the Buddha,
Sarnāth, dated 81 A. D.



Fig. 8. Buddha from Bimaran Reliquary,
Gāndhāra, circa 58 B. C.

first model of the Buddha-image must have been formulated some time before 78 A. D. The stylistic evidence of examples of the Gandhara School also lead to a similar conclusion.

Bachhofer somewhat dogmatically accepts the Bimaran reliquary⁴⁹) as the first production of the Gāndhāra School, ascribing this so-called earliest specimen to the time of Azes I (ca. 58 B. C.).⁵⁰) Foucher ascribes the beginning of the Gāndhāra School towards the end of the second century or the beginning of the First century B. C.

⁴⁸) Vincent Smith's assertion that "during the first two or three centuries of the Christian era Buddhist Sculptors had not arrived at any settled convention as to the correct way of representing the effigy of Gautama the Buddha" (Vincent Smith's — *A History of Fine Art*, 2nd ed., 1930 p. 57) is undoubtedly based on a somewhat rash generalisation. — ⁴⁹) Bachhofer, *Early Indian Sculpture*, I, p. 75. The Bimaran reliquary, discovered by Masson in the ruins of a stūpa near the road between Kabul and Jalalabad, is said to have been associated "with freshly minted coins of Azes I." The trustworthiness of Masson's report as to this coin association is doubted by Coomaraswamy, a doubt not shared by Bachhofer. Sir John Marshall, the most careful student of Indian antiquities, does not ascribe the reliquary to the time of Azes I, although he seeks in this example "the beginnings of the Gāndhāra School" (*Cambridge History of India*, I, 1922, p. 648). — ⁵⁰) Bachhofer, I, p. 73, Note 6. "The time of the reign of Azes I. cannot be exactly determined, but it will probably belong approximately to the third quarter of the I. century B. C."

Vincent Smith does not admit "that the origin of the Gāndhāra School long preceded the Christian era".⁵¹ If we closely examine the standing effigy of the Buddha, on the Bimaran reliquary (Fig. 8), which depicts the Monk as walking



Fig. 9. Headless Torso of the Buddha, Gāndhāra, dated 6 A. D.

with the bowl on the left hand, and the right hand in the gesture of reassurance, with the hair tied up in the characteristic Gāndhāra (?) convention⁵², we find that its design and convention has not the freshness of a primitive effigy, and in its various elements of schematic formula it cannot be accepted as the first essay, to portray the effigy of the Buddha, as the type is obviously a well matured one. If then the origin of the Gāndhāran type of the Buddha cannot be earlier than first century B. C. the Bimaran example should be dated much later than 58 B. C. and should not be associated with Azes I. If one accepts Foucher's alternative suggestion of the end of the 2nd century B. C. as the beginning of the Gāndhāra School, the dating of the reliquary with Azes I, would appear to be plausible. We are not concerned, here, with the question whether the first image of the Buddha was formulated at Mathura, or at Gāndhāra, — but with the earliest possible date of the first image — the beginning of the cult of the Buddha Image.

If we now consider the headless standing image of the Buddha from Lauriyan Tangai⁵³, now in the Calcutta Museum, with an inscription dated 6 A. D. (Fig. 9) we find that the treatment of the drapery indicated in schematic folds emphatically proclaims that this is not the first formulation of the figure in the Gāndhāra School and must have been based on an earlier and primitive formulation. If we also examine the miniature group of donators (?) with the seated image at the centre carved on the pedestal (Fig. 10), we find it is an exact repetition of a similar group from an analogous pedestal (Bachhofer, Plate 143, top) and apparently reproduces a common earlier formula, that is to say, the images with inscriptions dated 6 A. D.

⁵¹ Vincent Smith "*A History of Fine Art in India*", 1911, First Edition, p. 126. — ⁵² Various Scholars believe that this convention is earlier than the Gāndhāra School and occurs in the figure of Indr. (Brāhmaṇa Śānti) on a railing pillar at Bodh-gayā set up by Nāgadeva about 100 B. C. This undoubtedly provides the earliest convention of this manner of treating the coiffeur, so common in Gāndhāra Buddhas (Coomaraswamy, *The Buddha's Hair and Crown*. JRAS, 1928, p. 834). — ⁵³ Bachhofer, Pl. 142, right.

(Bachhofer, Plates 142, 143) are not the earliest specimens of their kind. In other words, even according to the history of the Buddha-Image in the Gāndhāra-School, the earliest example must have been considerably earlier than the first century A. D., that is to say, must have to be dated sometime in the first century B. C. If the Bimaran-reliquary is as early as Azes I., the first Gāndhāran Buddha should have come into existence about the beginning of the First century B. C., if not earlier.

The uncertain chronology of the earliest specimens of the Buddha Image, do not offer decisive evidence to fix the date of the origin or beginning of the cult of image-worship in Buddhism. But the upper limit appears to be provided by the data of the state of the doctrine which can be gleaned from the *Milinda-pañha*. In the passage cited above, Nāgasena comments on the absurdity of the worship of the Bowl, or the Robe of the Buddha, not to speak of the worship of His Image, which could not have therefore come into existence, until sometime after the time of Menander (ca. 150 B. C.). Although the current text of the *Milinda-pañha* could not perhaps be earlier than the First Century A. D., it undoubtedly contains evidence as to the state of the doctrine which must be contemporary with the date of the King. Anyhow, the available evidence, literary or monumental, does not permit the fixation of the date of the earliest antiquity of the Buddha Image, and one can only apologize for the negative character of the conclusions attained. It may be humbly claimed, however, that the poverty of the results achieved may have been somewhat compensated by the revelation of some of the stages in the development of the doctrine which led to the establishment of the cult of the Image of the Buddha.



Fig. 10. Socle of Buddha Image, Lauriyān Tāngai, dated 6 A. D.



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334
Sculpture - Indian
Buddha Image

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